



My Beloved Ones,

This Sunday's Gospel contains an important lesson for all of us, if we are truly to unite ourselves to our Creator and our brothers and sisters.

Coming from the Gospel of Matthew, the reading is a parable. The Lord tells us of a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he approached the servant to whom he had loaned 10,000 talents, the servant could not pay. The king ordered that he should be sold along with his wife, children, and all his possessions. The servant naturally fell at his master's feet, begging for time to repay his debt. The king was merciful towards his servant's plea. However, this same servant later approached one of his coworkers, who owed him the sum of 100 denarii. When his fellow servant begged for time to raise the funds, the Wicked Servant refused, and had him thrown into prison.

Several fellow servants witnessed the scene, and because they were disturbed at his lack of compassion, they reported his behavior to the King. Naturally, the King was furious, and when he summoned the servant who owed him the 10,000 talents he said, *'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me; and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?'* (Matthew 18:32-33) Christ finishes this parable by explaining that the wicked servant's prison sentence will befall us too, *"if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."*

There are a few details we can examine to contrast the willingness to forgive, with the Wicked Servant's hardness of heart. In the case of the Wicked Servant's 10,000 talents, the Lord is using a form of exaggeration. If we begin with the understanding that a denarius was the daily wage of a worker in Christ's time, and that one single talent could equal up to 10,000 denarii, we understand the trouble the first servant was in; using a minimum wage of \$40 a day, this servant owed the king over four billion US dollars! Obviously our Lord was trying to teach His disciples several crucial lessons: the Wicked Servant could have had no hope of realistically working that many hours to pay the king "everything", and yet the king had mercy on him regardless. Secondly, we now see that the other servant owed his coworker the comparatively smaller amount, equal to \$4,000, but the Wicked Servant was too full of pride and selfishness to remember the King's mercy in his own extraordinary circumstances.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, let us not be like the Wicked Servant and forget the mercy of our own Heavenly King, who lovingly understands our weakness and faults. Let us instead willingly forgive our brothers and sisters for the wrongs they have done to us. Only then we will we truly imitate the perfectness of our Father who is in Heaven.

**+ALEXIOS**

Metropolitan of Atlanta